



Letter to the Editor: Anti-Latino discrimination at Princeton (May 10, 1974)

By DAILY PRINCETONIAN STAFF

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The following is a letter to the editor written by Sonia Sotomayor '76 and published in the May 10, 1974, edition of The Daily Princetonian. Sotomayor explains a complaint filed by University students with the Health, Education and Welfare Department charging the University with "an institutional pattern of discrimination."

Anti-Latino discrimination at Princeton

By Sonia Sotomayor

May 10, 1974

On April 18, 1974, the Puerto Rican and Chicano students of Princeton filed a complaint with HEW charging the university with an institutional pattern of discrimination.

The facts of the complaint are these: 1) There is not one Puerto Rican or Chicano administrator or faculty member in the university; 2) There are two million Puerto Ricans in the United States and two and a half million more on the island itself. Yet there were only 66 Puerto Rican applicants this year, and only 31 Puerto Rican students on campus. While there are 12 million Chicanos in the United States, there were only 111 Chicano applicants and 27 students on campus this year; 3) Not one permanent course in this university now deals in any notable detail with the Puerto Rican or Chicano cultures.

Self-evident lack of commitment

The lack of commitment on the part of the university to the Puerto Rican or Chicano heritage seems self-evident from these facts. Yet statistical evidence is not the total concern or complaint of

the Puerto Rican or Chicano students — what is terrifying to us are the implications. The facts imply and reflect the total absence of regard, concern and respect for an entire people and their culture. In effect, they reflect an attempt — a successful attempt so far — to relegate an important cultural sector of the population to oblivion.

Chicanos were the first natives of the Southwest. They were the largest population sector to become citizens when the Southwest was incorporated into the United States. Puerto Ricans constitute 12 per cent of the population in New Jersey. Immediately surrounding Princeton — New Brunswick, Trenton, and Newark — they constitute approximately 15 per cent of the population. Yet we estimate that over 90 per cent of the Princeton community knows nothing about either culture other than that we speak Spanish and that we are presently complaining about something. The members of the student body, for the same reasons they study the French, Russians, English or Chinese, are the ones to benefit from an inclusion of our culture into the Princeton community and curriculum. Puerto Rican or Chicano students have no great need to study about their own culture — we live it. What good is it to know about what happens west of the Urals if you do not know what is happening a few miles around you?

Vanguards of societal change?

It has been said that the universities of America are the vanguard of societal ideas and changes. Princeton University claims to foster the intellectual diversity, spirit, and thoughts that are necessary components in order to achieve this ideal. Yet words are transitory; it is the practice of the ideas you espouse that affect society and are permanent. Thus it is only when Princeton fulfills the goal of being a truly representative community that it can attempt to instill in society a respect for all people — regardless of race, color, sex or national origin.

The feelings we are trying to convey was best stated by Frank Reed '76 when he said: “We only wish the opportunity as a people, to learn and be learned from.” This is our complaint, and what it signifies.

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